

LEBANON: STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

LEBANON: STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

by

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ABSTRACT

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The first U.S. military intervention in Lebanon was embarked on in 1958.¹ Now after almost 50 years, American interventionism in Lebanon has recurred due to new U.S. priorities triggered by Operation Iraqi Freedom. A new U.S. foreign policy orientation toward Lebanon gained further momentum with the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003.² The U.S. government has stated that its goals are to help Lebanon regain its sovereignty, freedom, and independence. However, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East is such that these goals are concomitant and compete with the preservation of the U.S.-Israeli strategic relationship. The United States should promote freedom and sovereignty for foreign nations without creating conditions whereby governments are perennially dependent on U.S. interventions for their survival. The United States can help the spread of democracy but without causing chaos and disorder. This case study of Lebanon analyzes the current strategic and political challenges, in light of Lebanon's political developments and U.S. interests in the country.

LEBANON: STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The United States of America and Lebanon had traditionally shared good relations. For many Americans, Lebanon is a pro-Western friendly nearly-democratic republic in a part of the world with few functioning democracies. Despite these good relations there are differences between American and Lebanese national interests.

The United States sees Lebanon's sovereignty and stability to be key to its own foreign policy interests in the Middle East. Hence, the United States publicly proclaims these to be goals of U.S. policy toward Lebanon. Although the United States did not have vital interests like oil, in Lebanon,³ both President Eisenhower in 1958, and President Reagan in 1983 treated Lebanon as if it were of extreme importance to U.S. national security interests in the region.⁴ Even today, certain U.S. policy makers believe that American national security interests in the Middle East depend on the outcome of U.S. policy initiatives to resolve the Lebanese crisis.⁵

The sharp sociopolitical and cultural divisions in Lebanon could dissolve into another Civil War between its different communities and political factions.⁶ The Lebanese crisis is rooted in internal political disputes and socioeconomic tensions, but foreign powers have frequently served as contributors to and instigators of Lebanon's domestic instability. Whether this instability arose from direct political appeals, arming of various factions, or interstate competition, one can trace the Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, Syrian, Iraqi, Iranian, and Jordanian, Israeli, even Libyan actors or sources in it.

Can the United States policy toward Lebanon help in achieving its sovereignty and stability and at what cost? What is first necessary is a) there must be an assessment of the multiple perspectives and objectives of the regional actors in Lebanon; b) a revision

of prior American policies in Lebanon from the perspective of the internal political dynamics among the Lebanese communities; and, finally c) an analysis of the current crisis to determine the suitability of current U.S. policy to optimally resolve the Lebanese sociopolitical impasse that continues to threaten peace and stability.

Historical Background

For centuries, Lebanon's geographic location explained invasions and political upheavals. Situated at the crossroads to Africa, Europe and Asia, Lebanon was invaded by the armies of the ancient Egyptians, the Romans, the Muslims, the Ottoman Turks, the Crusaders, the Egyptian forces of Ibrahim Pasha, the French, and the Allied forces during World War II. Lebanon experienced military operations and influence of the Syrians, Israelis, and the Palestinians, and the indirect political influence of the United States, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Lebanon's mountainous terrain enabled the many religiously distinct groups to maintain their cohesiveness, Lebanon hosted various groups which had relocated there from the years of the earliest Muslim empires, or later, who had either survived persecution, or might have been disadvantaged elsewhere. These communities enjoyed a form of self governance under the *millet* system of the greater Ottoman Empire, in which various religious leaders governed and were responsible for their own sect under the rule of the sultan.

In 1843, the Ottoman Empire administratively divided Mount Lebanon creating a Christian district in the north and an area under Druze control in the south. Then, in 1860, Lebanon witnessed devastating religious clashes and massacres between the Maronite and the Druze communities. Feudal sectarian conflict between Druze and

Christians resulted in the deaths of thousands.⁷ As a result, following European intervention, the Ottomans reunited the two sections of Mount Lebanon, this time under a single, non-Lebanese, Christian *mutasarrif* (governor) appointed by the Ottoman Sultan.⁸ The European intervention was also connected to their financial interests in Lebanon, which were often represented by non-Muslim agents protected through Capitulatory treaties, documents granting them foreign-national status, and the mixed-court system.

Those events left their scars on Lebanese national identity, and had dramatic repercussions on the Lebanese internal political dynamics and approach to foreign powers. The nineteenth century events caused internal displacements, the growth of Beirut,⁹ deepened divisions between the Lebanese factions, and increased their reliance on regional and international actors to resolve their internal political disputes.

During World War One, Lebanon suffered from famine, and a huge wave of emigration took place.¹⁰ The establishment of the French mandate in 1920 over Lebanon (as well as Syria) constituted the second foreign intervention that transformed the Lebanese political system. Although the political system adopted was based on power sharing among religious communities, it awarded the Christian community a dominant political position. Consequently, Arab opinion considered Lebanon to be an artificial creation of foreign imperialism, mostly because of its imposition through military defeat of the Arab forces under King Faysal. These had fought the Ottomans and aided the Western armies during World War I, and intended to establish an Arab kingdom. So the creation of the modern mandate in Lebanon ironically coincided with Faysal's 1920 defeat at the Maysalun Pass, Syria, by the French.¹¹ The prevalent nationalist mood in

the Arab world especially in Syria - where Lebanon was seen historically as part of greater Syria - was opposed to a separate political identity for Lebanon. The territories had not been divided in precisely the same way as the previous Ottoman administrative districts, so this opposition was expressed even more keenly in some areas, and amongst some communities than others, as well as among Faysal's supporters. The imposition of the mandate led to more divisions among the Lebanese factions. The Lebanese Christians sought French support to maintain an independent nation while assuring their own political power base. On the other hand, Arab nationalism motivated the majority of the Muslim community and prevented them from fully engaging in the domestic Lebanese politics. As a result, the Christian Lebanese, who also constituted the majority of the Lebanese population at that time, gained a virtual monopoly of political power.

Lebanese independence from the French mandate in 1943 was the result of nationalist activities and demands throughout the pre-World War Two period, and even more concerted protests, and strikes following the Allied forces intervention in 1941. The Allied Free French and British forces had promised Lebanese sovereignty and independence in 1941, and the British and the Americans were determined by 1943 to bring French dominance over Lebanon and Syria to an end.¹²

Lebanese independence produced the National Pact,¹³ an unwritten "gentlemen's agreement" that supplemented the formal constitution of the country. This agreement delineated the division of power between the Muslim and the Christian communities in the leading political positions. The Pact maintained the Christian political dominance by keeping key political, security and military positions as their special preserve. However,

it was generally understood that the National Pact involved the Muslim community 's "consent to the continued existence of Lebanon as an independent and sovereign state in the Arab world provided it considered itself, so to speak, part of the Arab family¹⁴

After Lebanon's emergence as a free democratic parliamentary republic, Lebanon faced the following four important strategic challenges:

- The Arab Israeli conflict.
- The Palestinian issue.
- The Syrian intervention in Lebanon.
- The weaknesses of its own political system which resulted in division and collapse.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict

Since 1948, Lebanon has suffered direct political, economic, military, and developmental effects. Its southern border constituted a frontline of the Arab-Israeli wars. The displacement of more than 100 000 Palestinian refugees, and their settlement in Lebanon in two waves constituted a major demographic, social, and most of all security threat to internal Lebanese stability.

The Arab-Israeli conflict revived Arab nationalism within the Lebanese Muslim community. The Suez (Tripartite) War, the French, British, and Israeli attack on Egypt in 1956 contributed to the destabilization of Lebanon. The rise of pro-Nasser sentiment and pan-Arabism in the wake of the Suez War conflicted with existing Lebanese pro-Western commitments and attitudes.

The Arab defeat in the June 1967 Six-Day War led to a second displacement of Palestinians and coincided with the radicalization of their communities. Due to their

mistreatment by host governments and militaries, the Cairo Agreement of November 1969 was intended to protect the Palestinians, prevent the transfer of responsibility for their affairs to host governments, and legitimized the military activities of the PLO inside Lebanon aimed at Israel.¹⁵ The Syrian military defeat in the 1973 October War, and subsequent Israeli military covert operations, including the assassination of three Palestinian leaders in Beirut in 1973, led to a breakdown in public order and attacks between various Lebanese political factions.¹⁶ These were the igniting incidents of the 1975 Civil War in Lebanon.

A considerable number of armed conflicts between Israel, the Palestinians, Syria and Iran during and after the Civil War were fought directly or through proxy groups on Lebanese territory. In 1978, Israel invaded Lebanon's southern territory. Israel occupied south Lebanon for 22 years despite the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 425 issued on March 19 demanding Israel's immediate withdrawal.¹⁷ The 1978 Israeli invasion aimed at creating a buffer zone south of the Litani River, thus providing greater strategic depth for Israel and exploiting Lebanese factional rivalries. Israeli aggression toward Lebanon manifested in a number of devastating wars: Operation Litani of 1978, Operation Peace for Galilee of 1982, Operation Accountability of 1993, Operation Grapes of Wrath of 1996, and Operation Just Reward of 2006. Despite the Israeli unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000, the unresolved aspects of the Lebanese – Israeli conflict remain. These include the Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory in the Shebaa Farms, seizure and arbitrary detention of Lebanese citizens, persistent and ongoing violations of Lebanese territorial

sovereignty through the use of ground aerial and maritime force, and currently through various manifestation of political pressure on the Lebanese government.

The Lebanese resistance against Israeli occupation of Lebanese territory was the direct cause for the establishment of Islamic parties such as Islamic Amal and “Hezbollah,” the “Party of God”.¹⁸ This resistance, in turn, was the major causative factor for the unilateral Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon in May 2000.¹⁹

During the July-August 2006 Lebanon War, Hezbollah survived a devastating air and ground war waged in order to free the two Israeli captured soldiers, to destroy its command and control assets, and eliminate its missile threat to northern Israel. The July-August 2006 Israeli military campaign failed to achieve Israel's intended objectives.²⁰ Anthony Cordesman assessed the success and failures of Israel in achieving the following objectives:

- “Destroy the Iranian Western Command prior to Iran’s emergence as full-blown nuclear power.”
- “Restore the credibility of Israeli deterrence after the unilateral withdrawals from Lebanon in 2000.and Gaza in 2005 countering the image that Israel was weak and was forced to leave.”
- Force “Lebanon to become and act as an accountable state, and ending the status of Hezbollah as a state within a state.”
- “Damaging or crippling Hezbollah, with the understanding that it could not be destroyed as a military force and would continue to be a major political actor in Lebanon.”

- Obtaining the release of the two Israeli soldiers that Hezbollah had captured without engaging in a major trade with prisoners held by Israel.²¹

These Israeli objectives were and remain direct threats to Lebanon's national security. Most observers believe that Israeli strategists continue to plan to neutralize Hezbollah in a new destructive war.

The July-August 2006 war ended through the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1701 on August 11, 2006.²² This UNSC Resolution provided the legal framework for assuring the freedom of captured persons; encouraged the permanent and peaceful resolution of disputes between Lebanon and Israel; and permitted the deployment of 15,000 regular Lebanese Army troops along a reinforced 15,000 UN Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in south Lebanon. UNSC Resolution 1701 was adopted under Chapter VI of the UN Charter that seeks "Pacific Settlement of Disputes" by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, or arrangements per Article 33 of the Charter.²³ It also called on the Lebanese government to properly police Lebanon's borders with UNIFIL's²⁴ support, and put into effect the proper strategies and mechanisms that will ensure the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1701, as well as that of the previous UNSC Resolution 1559 which concerns the disarmament of all armed militias in Lebanon.²⁵

The Lebanese are divided more than ever before on which defensive strategy is to be adopted for the full implementation of UNSC Resolution 1701, while retaining the capability to deter potential Israeli aggression. The Hezbollah missile arsenal, threats, tactics and attacks still constitute a national security issue for Israel and Lebanon. With the deadlock in pursuing a sustainable peaceful resolution, Hezbollah's arsenal and tactics remain the focal point of American efforts to ensure Israel's national security.

Hezbollah's credibility among the Lebanese population is based on its relative success in providing social and economic support to disempowered sectors of the population. Also important is the relative lack of corruption in its leadership, success in forcing the 2000 unilateral Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, and its survival of the deadly war waged against it in July-August 2006 by the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF), the mightiest and the most sophisticated armed forces in the region.

Many Lebanese view Hezbollah as a deterrent force against future potential Israeli aggression. Hassan Nasrallah and Hezbollah supporters claimed a costly "divine victory"²⁶ in July-August 2006 War but in fact, the Lebanese suffered severely from this new cycle of attacks and destructions. Lebanese disagreement about the broader dimension of Lebanese-Israeli conflict relates to their differing views on whether Hezbollah should be disarmed or whether it should be left with its own political and military capabilities to resist the Israeli occupation and aggression.²⁷

Hezbollah's combined identity – that of a political and social movement and military force – and its secretive operational structure has been crucial to its survival.²⁸ Despite the growing dispute over Hezbollah's disarmament, the majority of the Lebanese still believe that Hezbollah's existence is directly tied to resisting the Israeli occupation. Such a national resistance is viewed as being consistent with basic premises of international law on self-defense and resistance against any aggressor or occupying force.

The majority of the Lebanese including Hezbollah, believe that Hezbollah's arms should be addressed within a national defense plan that would convert the Lebanese army into the central pillar of Lebanon's forces. In that context, a Hezbollah resistance

provides an auxiliary capacity.²⁹ Given the non-implementation of those aspects of UNSC Resolutions 1559 and 1701 pertaining to disarmament, any resolution should be based on the following principles:

- Recognizing the Lebanese right to self defense.
- Lebanese national resistance should be based on a collective national decision-making process to determine the proper defense of national sovereignty.
- In the process above, the concepts of national defense and resistance should be a unifying factor rather than being a cause for the disintegration of the Lebanese state.
- Disarming Hezbollah shall not be forcibly achieved through the use of any internal or external entity (such as UNIFIL, the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), or any foreign army).
- Institutionalizing and integrating Hezbollah's arms and cadres within the Lebanese armed forces as part of a national strategy to defend Lebanese sovereignty and independence. Following the Lebanese Civil War, the regular Lebanese Armed Forces successfully integrated members from various Lebanese Christian and Muslim religious militias.

Lebanon's strategic approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict is based on its determination to abide by applicable international law and the full implementation of all UN resolutions related to this conflict. The requirements of these resolutions could be summarized from the Lebanese perspective as follows:

- The cessation of Israeli violations of Lebanon's territorial sovereignty.
- The immediate Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories to the borders recognized by the international community prior to 1967 War. That naturally includes the

West Bank and Gaza, and importantly for the Lebanese, the Shebaa farms and the El-Ghajar village.

- The right of return of all Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to their homeland regardless of the date of their original displacement.
- The release of all Lebanese and Israeli detainees.

Fulfilling these requirements while also integrating Hezbollah's forces into the Lebanese national armed forces or into a national security plan will meet Israel's security demands, the international adopted resolutions, and also satisfy the Lebanese.

The United States foreign policy platform that consistently supports the national security of Israel has always been considered controversial in that it prioritizes Israel's interests over Lebanese sovereignty. The U.S administration considers Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, and blamed it in 2006, for violating the Lebanese-Israeli (Blue Line)³⁰ border and abducting two Israeli soldiers. Consequently, the United States fully supported the Israeli campaign against Lebanon in July-August 2006. Despite the heavy toll of civilian casualties and devastating destruction of the Lebanese infrastructure for 33 days during the July-August 2006 war, initial American diplomatic efforts and statements prevented the timely implementation of a ceasefire during the early stages of the conflict. This was iterated by Condoleeza Rice when she has described the massive destruction, dislocation and human suffering in Lebanon as an inevitable part of the "birth pangs of a new Middle East",³¹ and by the U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Mr. John Bolton, in speaking to the BBC:

The US deliberately resisted calls for an immediate ceasefire ...This was intended to allow Israel to eliminate Hezbollah's military capability...the US decided to join efforts to end the conflict only when it was clear Israel's campaign wasn't working...³²

The Palestinian Refugee Issue

Although Lebanon did not become actively involved in the Six Day (June) War of 1967, it suffered the consequences of the Israeli military victories over Syria and Egypt. The guerilla forces of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) increasingly infiltrated into and operated from Lebanon, making the country a target for Israeli retribution. For example, Israeli commandos destroyed thirteen Lebanese Middle East Airlines (MEA) civilian airliners at the Beirut International Airport in December 1968 in retaliation for a Palestinian attack on an Israeli El Al Boeing 707 passenger aircraft in Athens.³³ Following the armed conflict between the Lebanese Army and the PLO in October 1969, Lebanon accepted the Cairo Agreement of November 1969³⁴ which permitted the Palestinians to carry arms at their refugee encampments, and to launch raids against Israel from Lebanese territory. The Black September crisis in 1970 in which the Jordanian army forced the exodus of the PLO from Jordan further increased the Palestinian presence in Lebanon.³⁵ The original 100,000 figure is a matter of dispute, and today an estimated 409,714 Palestinian refugees are registered with the UNRWA in Lebanon, a figure equivalent to 10% of the population.³⁶ The increased Palestinian presence increased sectarian pressures within Lebanon.

The United States, France and Israel provided clandestine support to the Maronite Christians and their Phalangist armed elements, while the predominantly Muslim but Druze-led secular Lebanese National Movement (LNM) aligned with the PLO.³⁷ In 1975, Civil War erupted in Lebanon, and the Lebanese Army disintegrated in early 1976.³⁸

The Syrian army intervened in Lebanon against the LNM-PLO coalition in June 1976. This intervention prevented a military defeat of the Lebanese Maronite Christians, and was endorsed both by the Arab League and the United States.³⁹ In March 1978,

Israeli forces invaded Lebanon in response to a PLO attack in Israel that had caused civilian casualties. U.S. President Jimmy Carter's administration supported UNSC Resolution 425 that called for Israel to cease hostilities and withdraw from Lebanon. Israel did not completely withdraw but established a "security zone" in South Lebanon in collaboration with the Lebanese South Lebanon Army of General Sa'ad Haddad. Subsequent UNSC resolutions called for the complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanese territory, but the United States blocked their implementation.⁴⁰

The Israeli invasion in Lebanon in 1982 forced a PLO withdrawal from Lebanon to Tunis. U.S. Special Envoy to Lebanon, Mr. Philip Habib was able to convince the PLO to withdraw their leadership, trained fighters, and arms as supervised by a multinational force, while the non-combatant Palestinians remained in their refugee camps under the Israeli control. This resulted in massacres in the Sabra and Shatila camps in Beirut ⁴¹ by Lebanese Christian Phalangist militiamen.⁴² The question of Israeli culpability was examined by the specially designated Kahan Commission in Israel. The United States organized a new multinational force, MNF ⁴³ with France and Italy intended to stabilize the ongoing conflict.

After their withdrawal, the PLO became increasingly focused on its goals in Palestine although Syrian-backed anti-Arafatist groups continued to influence and meddle in the Palestinian political process. The Palestinian refugees in Lebanon became essentially unrepresented forces due to the exclusion of the refugee issue from the Oslo process. They also remained a threat to Lebanon's national security because they are not immune to extremist currents and external manipulation.

The Palestinian issue manifests itself in two respects:

a) The unresolved issue of the Palestinian refugees' right of return. Israeli intransigence on this point is causing increased concern about any permanent settlement of the Palestinians in Lebanon. The permanent settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon would impact Lebanon's demographic and social structure, and their presence has already negatively impacted Lebanon's political development. Lebanon lacks the necessary capabilities to permanently alleviate the poor conditions of the Palestinian refugees residing on its territory. Lebanon was unable to adequately provide for the needs of its own citizenry who internally migrated from the South during the Civil War, or who remained in relative poverty in the rural countryside.

b) The Palestinian refugee camps became a safe haven for new salafist organizations. The Lebanese army had to wage an operation against a Palestinian group, Fateh al-Islam allegedly affiliated to al-Qaida at the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp when the group unexpectedly slaughtered 28 Lebanese Army soldiers. This action once again called into question the status of the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon.

The United States policy on 1948 Palestinian refugees appears unclear. The current administration has mentioned unspecified compensations for resolving the Palestinian refugee issue⁴⁴ while not addressing the issue of the permanent settlement. This SRP discusses some aspects of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon in order to highlight its linkage with Lebanese vulnerability and the broader issue of U.S. policies on the Arab-Israeli conflict. Unless the United States and the international community address and resolve the permanent settlement of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, this issue will continue to affect Lebanon's domestic stability and national security.

Syrian Policy towards Lebanon

The 1920 French mandate definition of a Lebanon included areas that were once part of Syria. This directly conflicted with the vision of King Faysal for an Arab kingdom that would have included Lebanon, parts of Syria, Palestine, Iraq, and parts of the Hijaz. After 1920 this vision was clearly unattainable.⁴⁵ However, Syria never normalized its relations with Lebanon through the exchange of diplomatic representatives as a sign of acknowledging Lebanese territorial sovereignty. In consequence, Lebanon does not possess an embassy in Damascus, and Syria does not have formal diplomatic representation in Beirut. Syria has opportunistically treated Lebanon as an extension of its political reach and strategic depth. After the Syrian military defeat during the October 1973 Middle East War, Syrian strategic interests in Lebanon became more sharply defined. The Syrian regime was isolated from its former ally, Egypt, when that country signed the Camp David Peace Accords with Israel, and the Syrian leadership was shocked by the speedy outcome of the Oslo Accords which further isolated it from obtaining the return of the Golan. Then, this was followed by a similar peace treaty between Jordan and the PLO. The Syrian regime used its influence over Lebanon to improve its negotiating position with Israel in an attempt to restore Syrian sovereignty over the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights in addition to relieving economic pressures within Syria. Syria had earlier been able to portray itself to the Arab world as a stabilizing force in the Lebanese civil strife, although the other countries involved and the Arab League were well aware of Syria's incentives in Lebanon.

The Syrian intervention in Lebanon began in 1976. Syrian military forces entered Lebanon as a peacekeeping force in 1976 endorsed by the Arab League,⁴⁶ and in accordance with the "Red Line Arrangement" which satisfied Israeli national security

interests, i.e., the Syrian forces did not move past the Litani River in south Lebanon.⁴⁷

The Syrian utilized political incentives and intimidation to coerce various key Lebanese figures to its will. After the United States Marines withdrawal in 1983, U.S. policy prioritized stabilization in Lebanon through reliance on Syrian influence and presence. The United States retreated from an activist policy aimed at solving the civil conflict in Lebanon, due to the attacks and kidnappings on its own citizens there in the 1980s.⁴⁸

During the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1990, the controversial presence of Syrian military forces in Lebanon led to deadly confrontations with many Lebanese factions. The Christian militia leader Bashir Gemayel mounted military resistance against the Syrian military presence and interference in Lebanon's internal politics in 1979-1980. Violent confrontations with the Syrians in Lebanon resumed in 1988 under the Lebanese Army chief of staff General Michel Aoun.⁴⁹ In this period, Lebanese responses to Syria's policies added to their internal conflict. While among the Christian groups there was a rising revolt against Syria, on the Muslim side this was not fully viewed as a proper avenue toward normalizing Lebanese Syrian relations. Aoun was appointed Prime Minister in an interim cabinet, when the Lebanese parliament failed to elect a president within the terms of the Constitution. The "war of liberation" waged by General Aoun against the Syrian military presence and interference in Lebanon led eventually to the Ta'if Agreement.

The Ta'if Agreement (or National Reconciliation Accord)⁵⁰ provided a framework to end the Lebanese Civil War. It partially acknowledged the demographic shift to a Muslim majority (but without an exact determination of that majority), reasserted Lebanese authority in South Lebanon (then occupied by Israel), and legitimized the

Syrian military presence in Lebanon and called for a Syrian military redeployment. The proposed redeployment of the Syrian forces was to be through consultations between the Lebanese and Syrian governments. The U.S. government did not object to the Syrian use of force to invade the Christian area of Mount Lebanon in order to enforce the implementation of the Ta'if Agreement.

The Syrian intervention in Lebanon became more controversial and disputed locally and internationally. In addition to political issues, Syria was using its military presence in Lebanon to its economic advantage. Within Lebanon, four major events led to stronger anti-Syrian sentiment: 1) the Israeli unilateral withdrawal in 2000 from south Lebanon; 2) the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1559;⁵¹ 3) the three-year term extension for Lebanese President Lahoud; and 4) the assassination of ex-Prime Minister Rafik Hariri. Hariri's assassination inflamed patriotic Lebanese demonstrations under the March 14th movement⁵² that demanded the immediate withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. On April 26, 2005, Syrian military troops fully withdrew from Lebanon under the pressure of the international community, in accordance with UNSC Resolution 1559, and with the support of a number of Arab states.

Currently, Lebanon finds itself caught between the conflicting goals and priorities of policies by various regional and international actors. The Syrian government has both complied with and resisted certain U.S. attempts to contain its influence in Lebanon. Despite the withdrawal of its military forces, Syria retains a great degree of influence through the Lebanese "pro-Syrian" political factions, and is accused of being a conduit of arms for the Hezbollah organization.⁵³ Syria tried to forestall the UN-sponsored investigation into the Hariri assassination which appears to be going forward, and was

accused of having a hand in subsequent assassinations in Lebanon. Syria still promotes a comprehensive settlement of existing Middle East issues hoping to regain Israeli-occupied territory in the Golan Heights.

The Lebanese broadly reject Syrian intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs. They believe that the Lebanese Syrian relations should be based on a mutual respect for sovereignty and independence. This should be manifested by a mutual exchange of diplomatic representatives, mutual respect for each others sovereignty, and reconsideration of certain economic agreements between the two countries. Many Lebanese anti-Syrian political figures believe that Syria is responsible for the Hariri assassination and other assassinations of Lebanese political and military figures who were well-known for their opposition to Syrian interventions in Lebanon, and who considered various Syrian activities, such as the illicit arming of the Hezbollah organization and other groups such as Fateh al-Islam within Lebanon, and the Syrian interference with the Lebanese parliamentary election of a new president, as Syrian attempts to destabilize Lebanon.

Lebanese-Syrian relations became even more strained when they were linked with Syria's relations with other regional and non-regional actors, especially Iraq. The United States has long viewed Syria as playing a destabilizing role in Lebanon and undermining U.S. political and military efforts in Iraq. The United States is also hostile to the Syrian support of various groups such as Hamas, Hezbollah, and Islamic Jihad. These organizations are deemed to threaten Israeli national security. The United States policy towards Syria was recently framed in the U.S. Federal Syria Accountability and

Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003 (U.S. Syria Accountability Act) which states:

To halt Syrian support for terrorism, end its occupation of Lebanon, stop its development of weapons of mass destruction, cease its illegal importation of Iraqi oil and illegal shipments of weapons and other military items to Iraq, and by so doing hold Syria accountable for the serious international security problems it has caused in the Middle East, and for other purposes.⁵⁴

Syria's political and strategic stance toward Iran, a perceived adversary to the United States and Israel, is an additional cause of United States' hostile attitude towards Syria. A continuing aim to deter and "contain" the Syrian regime was fully articulated by United States President Bush on January 2007 during his visit to the Middle East:

....my patience ran out on President Assad a long time ago. And the reason why is, is because he houses Hamas, he facilitates Hezbollah, suiciders go from his country to Iraq, and he destabilizes Lebanon.⁵⁵

According to Patrick Seale, a Middle Eastern analyst and journalist, Syria currently has three immediate preoccupations. The first concerns the international tribunal set up to try the men who killed Lebanon's former Prime Minister, Rafiq al-Hariri, which could cause political upheaval in Syria. A second Syrian preoccupation is that a more anti-Syrian regime in Lebanon might, with international support, seek to disarm Hezbollah. A third major Syrian preoccupation is of a radical shift in the regional balance. If the anti-Syrian March 14th coalition were to consolidate its position in Lebanon, it might be tempted, or pressured, into concluding a separate peace with Israel.⁵⁶

A limited number of Lebanese political figures have echoed certain American political sentiments that advocate violent regime change in Syria. However, the Iraqi experience has demonstrated to a far larger number of Lebanese that this is not a viable strategy that would serve Lebanon's long-term national security interests. As the

United States military intervention in Iraq has shown, violent regime change engenders new and unpredictable threats to regional security and stability. On the other hand, the Lebanese could not accept less than the following:

- An impartial trial for those responsible for the assassination of Lebanese political leaders before the international tribunal and appropriate penalties if found guilty.
- Syrian recognition of Lebanese sovereignty and non-intervention in Lebanon's internal political affairs.
- Syrian assistance in implementing international resolutions preventing any illegal arms smuggling and terrorist infiltration through the Lebanese-Syrian borders.

Such measures would at long last establish healthier Lebanese-Syrian relations.

Political Reforms and Restating the Lebanese Impasse

Bilal Saab and Elie Al-Chaer reflect that: "The Lebanese political system sadly resembles that of world politics: it is essentially anarchic. In Lebanon, a delicate and fragile power-sharing scheme between different religious communities assures public security and political stability." While appealing on the surface, this system has its costs.⁵⁷ Julia Chocair states that, "Lebanon's confessional system is like a patient with a chronic disease who periodically erupts into a crisis. Even low levels of internal dissatisfaction or external pressure can upset the delicate balance of domestic political power and cause the government to disintegrate."⁵⁸ The Lebanese political environment continues to reflect the political power struggle between its religious communities, and political factions.

Marina Ottoway, in writing about Iraq, explains that "the protection of individual human rights do not satisfy the needs of groups for protection and preservation of their

separate identities.”⁵⁹ National agreements, constitutions, or other formal arrangements are needed to satisfy the groups’ needs for protection, representation, political participation and receipt of public goods. The communities’ political behavior is based on their ultimate objective to maintain their respective distinct identities, but obtain these group-based needs through the central state. In the past, Lebanese acted politically on the basis of clans and later, political parties. Now the nation must satisfy the needs for physical security and political participation.

(1) Physical security is the ability to withstand any domestic or external physical threat posed by any community, group, the state itself or any foreign regional power. Lebanese history is marked by violent confrontations among the Lebanese themselves and against neighboring countries. In the past, physical security was guaranteed through a feudal system of fealty to elites of each sect. However, each member of the community is still marked by their identification and participation in either a traditional or modern confessional system of identity.

(2) Any community or confessional group must be able to realize effective and equal participation in the political regime, structurally and functionally.

- Structurally, the Lebanese communities have to be fairly represented by equivalent rights to hold key positions within the legislative and executive branches of government, and secondly by being represented fairly and effectively in the legislative and executive branches of government.

- Functionally, the Lebanese communities must also be able to influence the decision - making process within the executive branch of government, and being

effective and independent when performing any function related to the legislative branch of the government.

Consensual Democracy

The confessional system has spared Lebanon the effects of a singular authoritarian leadership cult as experienced by Arab regimes like Egypt, Iraq, or Syria in the twentieth century. Paradoxically, it has also prevented Lebanon's transition to a truly democratic state. Nor has the confessional system eliminated the factional strife it was designed to avoid.⁶⁰

Any acceptable form of governance should recognize the various Lebanese communities' distinct identities. A consensual, confessional democracy redefines the dynamics between the majority and the minority, between a conventional "political opposition" and the government. This concept of consensual, confessional democracy is not new to Lebanon's government and politics. Since the forging of the National Pact of 1943, Lebanese political leaders have attempted with various degrees of success to implement a long-lasting democratic system based on political power-sharing. The 1989 Ta'if Agreement embodied a more concerted effort to establish the foundations of consensual democracy in Lebanon. For example, the National Pact's previously more precise delineation of political power-sharing (based on the 1932 census) was subject to erosion because of demographic and/or external influences, like the migration of large numbers of the Christian communities, higher fertility rates of the Muslim communities, and also Syria's role in Lebanon. The Ta'if Agreement established the basis of a consensual democracy where strict delineation of power sharing is as important as the achievement of political consensus. For example, Article II.D.6 of the Ta'if Agreement

emphasizes the achievement of consensus in Lebanese Cabinet sessions and recourse to a vote in cases of disagreement. Essentially, the 1989 Ta'if Agreement provides a transition for the Lebanese confessional democratic model toward enhanced consensus.

The current Lebanese Constitution incorporates the political reforms that are contained in the Ta'if Agreement. The absolute majority of the Lebanese still support the aims of the Ta'if Agreement. Yet, in the current political crisis, the difficulties of implementing the Agreement imply the following priorities:

- The full implementation of the Ta'if Agreement as incorporated in the Lebanese Constitution.
- Defining a mechanism to resolve misinterpretations of the Lebanese Constitutional provisions related to the Ta'if Agreement.
- Defining a mechanism and implementing changes to the Lebanese Constitutional provisions associated with the Ta'if Agreement where in such provisions may have become outdated or lead to the dysfunctional operation of the Lebanese legislative and executive branches of the government

Any emerging political system should be the result of communal political consensus. Any flaw in ensuring the basis of communal political consensus would lead to instability, alterations in the political balance of power, and then, potentially, to public disorder and civil strife. Throughout Lebanese history, the consensus among the diverse communities has resulted in the expansion of the authority and competency of the central government. In contrast, the diverse communities' inability to reach a political consensus has paralyzed the central government.

Lebanon needs effective and enforceable constitutional arrangements and protections arrived at consensually. Those arrangements should contain community tensions, manage democratic transitions, and achieve economic development. This is a critical issue for policymakers today, and extends beyond the immediate need for amendments. The case of Lebanon has implications for political development in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lebanese political reform should endeavor to achieve a central governmental authority and competency that is as strong and effective as the collective will and ability of the community groups to meaningfully and effectively participate in the executive and legislative branches of a consensual democratic government.

Reformers should remember that: the community groups cannot rely on foreign powers in order to force domestic political choices.

Lebanon has failed to elect a new president since November 24, 2007 as a result of the ongoing political imbalance and unsettled dispute over needed political reforms. The divisions between the Lebanese religious and political factions continue to risk another round of civil war. The current Lebanese political system has reached a deadlock in ensuring the continuity and performance of the Lebanese institutions and the constitutional order. The Lebanese Parliament could not provide the absolute majority required for a constitutional parliamentary quorum necessary for the election of a president. The political opposition refused to cooperate with the majority in electing a new president before it receives promises that it will obtain additional political powers, and not serve merely as a symbolic opposition. The opposition wanted assurances

regarding the reallocation of political power within the future cabinet and its agenda; and secondly, an agreement about the basis of the future electoral law.

The United States has a stake in resolving the current Lebanese crisis in accordance with its own priorities and interests. Through the autumn of 2007 and into 2008, the United States demanded an immediate unconditional parliamentary election of a Lebanese president as the first step in resolving the current political crisis. At the same time, the United States condemned the Syrian efforts to prevent such an election and the perceived Syrian efforts to destabilize Lebanon. These views were presented by President Bush in a statement about the resolution of the crisis.⁶¹ He encouraged the Lebanese to elect a president based on the “50% plus one” parliamentary vote, and proclaimed that the international community would be ready to recognize the legitimacy of the newly elected Lebanese president. The proposed “50% plus one” idea contradicted with several plans supported by the French government, the Arab League, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The Lebanese political opposition noted that Bush’s suggestion would violate the Lebanese Constitution and thus the country’s sovereignty. Conversely, the Lebanese parliamentary majority considers the United States’ suggestion to politically support its position and its negotiations with the opposition.

In November 2007, Congressman Gary L. Ackerman, the Chairman of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia said that “Lebanon truly is on the brink of either the collapse of the Cedar Revolution, or the return of Civil War.”⁶² U.S. concerns over Iran and its regional role continued in this period despite the new National Intelligence Estimate report which cast doubts on the Iran’s advancement of its nuclear program in the near term.

In March 2008, United States dispatched the guided missile destroyer USS Cole to waters off the coast of Lebanon in the Eastern Mediterranean. The U.S. State Department described the action as a support of “regional stability,” but some analysts portrayed it as being aimed at Syria.⁶³ The Lebanese prime minister denied requesting “warships,” but White House spokesperson Gordon Johndroe and he gave different impressions regarding any prior consultation.⁶⁴ Although the purpose of the USS Cole’s deployment remains unclear, this action along with the resignation of U.S. Navy Admiral William Fallon, commander of the U.S. Central Command, could signal a possible military escalation that might further destabilize the region.

Deploying U.S warships offshore Lebanon’s territory as a sign of an increased concern about Lebanon’s stability calls into question the specific nature of American strategic interests in Lebanon and also unearthed memories of prior U.S military interventions in the country. Although Lebanon does not possess oil, the United States has deemed it important to its regional or global interests which have shifted over time. The United States prior interventions in Lebanon were not enacted merely with an eye to Lebanon’s stability, but were respectively oriented toward the Cold War, and then, to new threats to Israel’s security. Currently, the United States views Lebanon through the lenses of the global war on terror (GWOT), the conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, and its desire to “contain” Iranian influence in the region.

Nizar Abdel-Kader writes that the 1958 deployment of U.S. Marine Corps units in Lebanon constituted the first American military intervention in Lebanon as well as an enactment of the Eisenhower doctrine.⁶⁵ Yet, Erika Alin explained that the Eisenhower administration informed the Lebanese president that any request for intervention could

not be based on the Eisenhower doctrine but that the U.S. must instead justify the action as protection for American citizens in Lebanon and “to preserve the country’s independence and integrity.”⁶⁶ Alin adds that “in legally justifying the intervention, the administration subsequently emphasized Lebanon’s right to collective self-defense under article 51 of the UN Charter.”⁶⁷ These three different explanations of the military intervention encourage us to reexamine the Eisenhower doctrine.

The Eisenhower doctrine provided that the United States:

would, in the third place [there are two other possible scenarios], authorize such assistance and cooperation to include the employment of the armed forces of the United States to secure and protect the territorial integrity and political independence of such nations, requesting such aid, against overt armed aggression from any nation controlled by International Communism.⁶⁸

Here, for those who see an enactment of the doctrine in Lebanon, “international communism” was apparently embodied in indigenous nationalist and socialist principles of Egyptian president, Jamal Abd al-Nasir, in the view of the U.S. President and his secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. Nasir’s supporters in Lebanon were threatening the current status quo, as well as U.S. aims for mutual defense pacts elsewhere in the region. President Chamoun had requested the American use of force to secure and protect Lebanese territorial integrity and political independence. In this case as Alin describes, the doctrine “was ambiguous on the circumstances justifying U.S. military actions--it failed, among other things to clearly distinguish between Communist from nationalist activities, the latter of which were not legally subject to U.S. action under the doctrine-- and the UAR was neither controlled by ‘international communism,’ nor engaged in armed aggression against Lebanon.”⁶⁹

Although this United States military intervention was largely caused by domestic Lebanese political strife in May of 1958 between supporters and detractors of President Chamoun, it was carried out in the overall context of events which were threatening Western interests in the Middle East. The 1958 United States intervention in Lebanon was largely based on the U.S. perceptions of an immediate threat to Lebanon's government, and of Arab nationalist influence in the region.⁷⁰ For Lebanon, it was an internal struggle for political power reallocation, fueled by regional ambitions to change the internal balance of power among Lebanese religious communities.⁷¹

The intervention effectively ceased a challenge to the Lebanese government which was based on objections to the president's efforts to alter the constitutional limits of his term. It ended in a high-level diplomatic effort to elect the commander-in-chief of the Lebanese army as president.⁷² Although General Fouad Chehab had opposed the American intervention, he was elected because he was an honest, credible and unbiased figure, and most of all, he was capable of building consensus across a broad spectrum of diverse Lebanese sociopolitical and cultural factions.⁷³

The United States involvement in Lebanon in the years following the 1958 intervention was mainly diplomatic, especially in the early stage of the Lebanese Civil War. These U.S. diplomatic efforts reflected various stages of foreign policy in the Middle East, reflecting the concerns of successive American administrations who were most often concerned with the Arab Israeli conflict, retaining access to oil, and countering their perceived enemies in the region.

According to William Quandt, the 1982-1983 United States intervention in Lebanon was "an instructive example of how a peace-keeping operation could devolve into active

support for one faction in the fratricidal and devastating Lebanese Civil War, and into one of the largest U.S. foreign policy failures in the Middle East.”⁷⁴ The initial U.S. military intervention in Lebanon in August 1982 was part of the peacekeeping Multinational Force (MNF). It included contingents of United States Marines, French paratroopers, Italian soldiers, and British soldiers in a mission to put an end to the bloody Israeli siege of Beirut, and which facilitated the formal exit of the disarmed PLO forces from Lebanon to Tunis under the leadership of Yasir Arafat. Subsequent “understandings” on how to “stabilize” Lebanon took place between the President Ronald Reagan’s administration, the invading State of Israel, and the Lebanese Christian-dominated government of Amin Gemayel.

The United States decision to support a particular faction in the Lebanese government during the Lebanese Civil War was rejected, naturally, by those Lebanese who were opposed to that faction, including the “progressive forces,” the communities who came under attack, and others. It destroyed the perception of American impartiality, and brought the U.S. military forces in Lebanon into armed conflict.⁷⁵

The American troops became entangled in skirmishes with Muslim militias, and U.S. Navy warships and combat aircraft off the coast shelled and bombed Muslim and Druze villages. The disastrous intervention culminated with an attack by a suicide truck bomb against the USMC barracks in Beirut International Airport that left 241 Marines dead. A few months later, President Reagan cut his losses and pulled the United States military forces out of Lebanon.⁷⁶

John Benson Matthews, who wrote a dissertation about the U.S. peacekeeping in Lebanon, noted that “ordinary Americans failed to understand the significance of the

scenes of flag-draped caskets of deceased Marines, in part, because U.S. Interests in Lebanon were ill-defined⁷⁷ at that time. They were still grappling with the emotions raised during the hostage crisis in Iran, and knew the U.S. had bungled its rescue attempt. The United States government intelligence agencies later attributed the Marine barracks bombing in Beirut to the Hezbollah organization. Other independent sources relate those attacks to different parties.⁷⁸ This could be true for the simple reason that Hezbollah was not even formed in 1983.

The United States presence in Lebanon during 1982-1983, and its continuous support for Israel which occupied part of South Lebanon following its 1982 invasion, increasingly brought the U.S. into conflict with newer political factions in Lebanon, especially those engaged in resistance to Israel. At that time the Reagan administration had secured the release of the U.S. hostages in Iraq through a negotiated deal, and overtly supported the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein in its war against Iran.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Syria was backing Iran, the enemy of its antagonist neighbor, Iraq, in contrast to most other Arab states.

The U.S. preferred to withdraw its forces and its support to the Lebanese authorities. In the years following the 1983 Beirut bombings, U.S. policy towards Lebanon shifted dramatically from a conditional level of support for Lebanon's sovereignty that accommodated Israeli national security interests to acquiescence with Syrian influence over the country.

The 1983 United States intervention in Lebanon resulted in a huge setback for American policy in the region. Subsequent kidnappings and killings of U.S. citizens in Lebanon angered Americans and promoted analysis of the situation from a

counterterrorist perspective. It seemed that the U.S. was unwilling to undertake limited military interventions that would result in casualties,⁸⁰ held an inflexible (yet inconsistent, given Irangate) view on terrorist activities, and offered no strong assistance in resolution of the Lebanese Civil War.

Many factors contributed to the relative American policy failure in Lebanon during the 1982-1983 intervention as compared to its 1958 intervention. First, there had been no actual “war” triggering the 1958 intervention. Secondly, Lebanon had been thoroughly destabilized by 1982-83 by its civil war and the direct military intervention of Israel and Syria. Thirdly, the internal conflict among the Lebanese was directly affected by the stand-off between Israel and Syria.

Lebanon continued to suffer from the civil war during the remainder of the 1980s, until the achievement of the previously discussed Ta’if Agreement. The United States continued to provide unwavering political support for the Israeli presence in Lebanon defined as security for Israel’s northern border despite the existence of UNSC resolutions calling for its withdrawal.

Lebanon has acquired additional symbolic significance in the European and American attempts to encourage democracy in the Middle East, particularly in the 2004-2005 period when new “democracies” emerged in Europe. Following Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, the United States readopted the claim that Syria and Iran were playing a destructive role in Iraq. The U.S. had long opposed Syrian support for Hezbollah, Hamas and Islamic Jihad which directly threaten Israel. Despite the obvious ideological distinctions between al-Qai’da, and the state-actor status of Syria and Iran, the Bush Administration targeted Iran directly as a member of the axis of evil, and both

Syria and Iran as direct or indirect targets for the global war on terror (GWOT). The U.S. has for some time, supported a policy of encouraging “regime change” in Tehran, and devoted 72 million dollar to this purpose.

Lebanon’s concerns with U.S policy were directly affected by these new dynamics. Many Lebanese have close political and social ties with Syria for historical reasons. Obviously, Lebanese Shiites are co-religionists with Iranians and many Iraqis. Iran has provided political, military, and financial support to Hezbollah. The Lebanese sympathize with the cause of an independent Palestinian state. Most importantly, the Lebanese government and society at large do not consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization. Instead, Hezbollah is perceived by the Lebanese as an organized national resistance movement that succeeded in ending the Israeli military occupation of Lebanese sovereign territory in 2000. Thus, Lebanese perceptions of and interactions with Hezbollah drastically differ from the United States’ perception and classification of Hezbollah as a “terrorist organization”.

The current U.S. government’s support for the Cedar Revolution became entangled with Lebanon’s internal political dynamics. This support is intended to safeguard the national security of Israel and contain Iran and Syria. The American engagement is not impartial and not without consequences. The narrow and short-term focus of the United States on its “terrorist” classification of Hezbollah and its disarmament creates dangerous tensions within Lebanon’s domestic political environment and lessens opportunities for meaningful intra-Lebanese dialogue and the establishment of much desired and necessary political consensus. Thus, the United States appears to be repeating the political errors of its intervention in Lebanon during

1982-1983 by siding with one Lebanese group, e.g., predominantly the Christian anti-Syrian and Sunni Muslim Lebanese political factions, against others. The extremely one-sided and narrowly focused American policy has polarized the country into a duel that is just short of a civil war, and extremely far from promoting democracy and insuring stability.

The United States policy lacks a conceptual framework and thus any real strategy for encouraging concrete Lebanese governmental political reforms. Yet true reforms are necessary, and not merely a U.S. sponsoring of the Cedar Revolution. The U.S. could be accused of indulging its desire for stability in Lebanon at the expense of a vision of real democracy. This absence of a coherent and long-term United States strategy is a significant problem because the potential of political reform in Lebanon is dependent to a significant extent on the actions of the international community.

The domestic and international pressures on Lebanon following Hariri's assassination provided a new opportunity for political change. They resulted in the Syrian exodus from Lebanon and galvanized a domestic Lebanese grassroots movement with the genuine desire of domestic political reforms that would transcend the sect-linked boundaries of Lebanon's confessional political system. Although Lebanon suffered through the July-August 2006 Israeli assault, its domestic political system and, most importantly, its Armed Forces did not disintegrate. However, the country is threatened by political instability as has been emphasized, as well as economic instability in riots over power cuts.

What sort of reform must take place in Lebanon to maintain the momentum of national consensus and resolve the economic and political crises? Given that the deep

divisions in Lebanon's political system will outlast Syrian intervention, what is the proper way forward for Lebanon? And what should the United States and Europe do to promote the best outcome?⁸¹

Despite the public pronouncements of the United States Bush Administration, it is unclear if current U.S. policies are genuinely committed to the preservation of an independent and unified Lebanon, or whether the U.S. views Lebanon as a perennial battlefield in the U.S.-Israeli rivalry with Iran and Syria. In short, it is unclear if Lebanon's unity and independence are expendable for the attainment of tactical short-term and temporary U.S. policy goals in rolling back a perceived Iranian influence in the Middle East, "containing" Syria, and preventing challenges to Israeli national security goals. The American experience in Iraq clearly demonstrates that the dissolution of nation-states in the Middle East engenders long-term regional instability and unpredictable and transnational threats that can empower non-state groups with extreme ideologies.

It was once thought that such groups would not likely form in Lebanon. However, the Lebanese armed forces demonstrated their willingness to decisively deal with domestic terrorist threats such as Fateh al-Islam, and other al-Qa'ida-affiliated groups. This raises the importance of having adequate military equipment resources, and accepting the resulting human and political consequences.⁸²

A U.S. policy that would genuinely ensure Lebanon's independence while maintaining its internal stability and unity, and also help to promote Lebanon's democratic institutions and processes, would mutually benefit Lebanon and America. Conversely, U.S. policy should not continue to threaten Lebanon's confessional system and consensual democracy. Lebanese fragmentation will work against the United

States and Israel's long-term national security interests in Lebanon and in the broader Middle East.

Democratization has been a pillar of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East for decades. It was newly emphasized post-9/11 as part of the “long-term antidote to combat terrorism,” in U.S. national security strategy ⁸³ because failing states were deemed likely sanctuaries for terrorism.

The operation of democracy in the United States functions within structures evolving from the nation's political history. In the United States, the powers of the president's office, composition of the cabinet, and separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers are quite different than in governmental structures of other countries. In the United States, this environment for a democratic process also includes two parties formed on the basis of sociopolitical and economic ideologies rather than ethnically or religiously-based affiliations. In addition, Constitutionally-granted freedoms have come to be thought of as being a part of democracy. This American-based concept and practice of democracy could not be transplanted into a political system which has traditionally operated with different mechanisms and forms of representation, especially those based on citizens' religious or ethnic backgrounds.

U.S. efforts to help democratize other countries should be tailored to the needs of building consensus across national communities rather than simply fulfilling U.S interests or helping it defeat terrorism. In addition, the adoption and practice of a democracy based on a simple majority rule could not be a solution to the current Lebanese political crisis as long as the diverse communities feel threatened, or are inhibited from political participation. Achieving governance via simple majority decisions

in a system in transition to democracy is very ambitious. This type of democracy cannot be reached overnight nor can be forcibly imposed by a foreign power, as it would then lack domestic and regional credibility.⁸⁴ For Lebanon, the roadmap for an improved system of governance should start with measures to enhance consensual democracy, such as building mutual trust among the diverse communities, and most of all satisfying the needs of these communities for physical security and political participation. Any transformation from the current political system into an improved system based on simple majority rule, if at all appropriate to the Lebanese sociopolitical structure, should be consensual, transitional, and sequential, generating not only the approval of the majority but also the consent of the minority.

The situation in Iraq has shown that unless the Iraqis succeed in building their new government on the basis of consensus rather than coercion, there is no point in talking about democracy.⁸⁵ Any comparison between the United States policies in Iraq and Lebanon requires some distinctions. With United States troops “on the ground” in Iraq, U.S. policies have worked to achieve a political consensus between the Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish factions in Iraq. Iraqi governing officials did not hesitate to directly converse with Iran when necessary over issues involving Iraqi national stability and security, and some sources have urged the United States to do so as well.⁸⁶ A similar practical approach – in which all parties are part of the conversation -- could be employed to constructively build a long-term strategy in Lebanon when addressing the issue of democratization.

U.S. efforts to bring stability and to fortify the central government in Iraq have been based on the theory of building consensus across various Iraqi communities. These

efforts have necessarily included parties who have a history of ties with Iran, and reaching out even to some who had opposed the United States military presence in Iraq. The U.S. in fact realized that the only way to achieve stability in Iraq was to encourage various Iraqi factions to be part of the political process, and that took place in a confessional framework.

Since there are some similarities to the governance system and details of the crisis in Lebanon, any U.S. efforts should rely on the diplomatic tool of power rather than a military one in assisting Lebanon with its political crisis. As other observers have pointed out, the United States exerts a constructive socioeconomic influence in the Middle East.⁸⁷ Regional American corporate and company headquarters were located in Beirut for more than two decades prior to the start of the disastrous Lebanese Civil War. This prior United States influence and regional relationship has been largely replaced by the European Union (EU) and its Euro-Med Association Agreements with Arab countries and Israel.⁸⁸ Despite the United States rhetoric about democratization in the Middle East, U.S. pronouncements have not been followed with concrete and targeted socioeconomic investment and assistance to countries in the region that would further mutually acceptable goals of socioeconomic development. The U.S. assisted Lebanon in the wake of the 2006 war, but not with sufficiently tangible programs to alleviate its socioeconomic crisis.

Conclusion

For decades, the Lebanese population suffered the agonizing effects of internal and regional rivalries. Civil strife, regional interference, and wars by proxies affected Lebanon. Because Lebanon did not constitute a vital interest to some actors in the

international community in general and the United States in particular, no successful international intervention ended its Civil War; rather, other Arab states led that effort.

The United States' as well as the international and Arab communities' assistance is crucial to the Lebanese in resolving their current political debacle. Lebanon's domestic political instability has undesirable regional ramifications. Lebanon cannot independently resolve its conflict with Israel, normalize its relation with Syria, nor resolve the Palestinian refugees. Simultaneously, the Lebanese face the challenge of developing a politically mature approach to domestic political reform while these regional policy issues are not yet resolved. With regard to domestic reform, the international parties could merely assist, by endorsing an internal resolution and not in imposing one.

Lebanon is a case study for the problems in resolving complex, multidimensional stresses in a small country. At the same time, the simple lesson to be learned from previous conflicts in Lebanon is that the use of force was not the optimal or sole option. The first U.S. military intervention in Lebanon was embarked on due to regional calculations option to achieve political objectives. Re-enacting this era, or the cycles of violence in the Civil War would only result in additional grievance and agony. Only crisis resolution based on human values as opposed to crisis management based on securing vital interests to the U.S. could alleviate the situation of the Lebanese, and this is true of the broader Middle East as well.

Appropriate levels of United States involvement and socioeconomic assistance to Lebanon are of crucial importance in resolving Lebanon's domestic political crisis. Despite the various armed conflicts that have impacted and continue to adversely affect

Lebanon's economy and society, the Lebanese people have demonstrated their resiliency in picking up the pieces and rebuilding their country again and again. However, although overall national poverty levels have been reduced, the relative national poverty rates in certain regions that are more politically sensitive for Lebanese and regional stability and security have actually increased. For example, the poverty rate in South Lebanon as a share of national poverty increased from nine percent (9%) in 1996 to fifteen percent (15%) in 2004. South Lebanon was devastated during the July-August 2006 war. The agricultural economy in South Lebanon has also been adversely impacted by the presence of approximately one million unexploded cluster munitions that were needlessly launched by the Israeli forces primarily during the last 72 hours of the conflict and Israel still refuses to provide information on where they are.⁸⁹ The need for sustained economic assistance to Lebanon is of paramount importance.

A creative, constructive, and dynamic United States socioeconomic approach to the Lebanese crisis must involve the Palestinians in Lebanon, the majority of whom continue to be the poorest of the poor in Lebanon. The United States could also diminish the level of factionalism in Lebanese politics when it comes to the Palestinian issue in Lebanon. United States economic assistance to Lebanon can be independently structured so that the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon play a more constructive and economically beneficial role if relieved from their perennial state of poverty.

It is clear that Lebanon faces many strategic opportunities and challenges that stem from its domestic, regional, and international concerns. Interventions and interventionism have not proven to be the solution for resolving these concerns which have changed and evolved over time.

Endnotes

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⁸ Kamal Salibi, *A House of Many Mansions: The History of Lebanon Reconsidered* (Berkeley, C.A.: University of California Press, 1988), 69.

⁹ Leila Fawaz, *Migrants and Merchants in Nineteenth-Century Beirut* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

¹⁰ Akram Khater, *Inventing Home: Emigration, Gender, and the Middle Class in Lebanon, 1870-1920* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

¹¹ Salibi, 31.

¹² Ibid., 184.

¹³ Ibid., 185 -186. The National Pact was "an unwritten gentlemen's agreement" between the Christian leaders of the Constitutional bloc and the Muslim leaders "to supplement the formal Constitution of the country and have equal effectiveness." The National Pact is unwritten and there is "no formal record" of it, but it promises that the President of the Republic would always be Maronite as well as the command of the army, and the directorate of public security. The President of the Council of Ministers (prime minister) would always be Sunni. The President

of the National Assembly would always be Shi'a. The deputy speaker of the Parliament would always be a Greek Orthodox. Members of Parliament were to be selected in a ratio of 6:5 in favor of Christians to Muslims.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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²² United Nations, Security Council, "Resolution 1701," 11 August 2006; available from <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/465/03/PDF/N0646503.pdf?OpenElement>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

²³ United Nations, "Charter of the United Nations," 26 June 1945; available from <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>; Internet; accessed 20 March 2007.

²⁴ "According to Security Council resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978) of 19 March 1978, UNIFIL was established to *Confirm the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon; *Restore international peace and security; and *Assist the Government of Lebanon in ensuring the return of its effective authority in the area. According to Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) of 11 August 2006, the UNIFIL mandate was altered to carry on the requirements of UNRES 1701", United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, "Lebanon-UNIFIL-Mandate," available from <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/missions/unifil/mandate.html>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

²⁵ Hany T. Nakhleh, *The 2006 Israeli War on Lebanon: Analysis and Strategic Implications*, Strategic Research Project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 23 March 2007), 3.

²⁶ William M. Arkin, *Divining Victory: Airpower In The 2006 Israel-Hezbollah War* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL: Air University Press, July 2007), xxiv.

²⁷ International Crisis Group, 24.

²⁸ Nakhleh, 7.

²⁹ International Crisis Group, 24.

³⁰ The Blue Line is the demarcation line between Lebanon and Israel as published by the United Nations on 7 June 2000 for the purpose of determining whether Israel had fully withdrawn from Lebanon according to U.N. Resolution 425, as it is not the same as the pre-1978 border.

³¹ Condoleezza Rice as quoted in Rami Khouri, "Condi Rice's Mid-East Fantasy Ride," *The Daily Star*, 31 July 2006, available from <http://www.aaiusa.org/press-room/2308/mustread072406>; Internet; accessed 19 March 2008.

³² BBC News, "Bolton Admits Lebanon Truce Block," 22 March 2007; available from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6479377.stm; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

³³ The attack against the El Al Boeing 707 in Athens had been carried out by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Kirsten E. Schulze, *Israel's Covert Diplomacy in Lebanon* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 71.

³⁴ "The Cairo agreement was signed on Monday, 3rd November 1969, between the Lebanese delegation headed by Army Commander General Emile al-Bustani, and the Palestine Liberation Organization delegation, headed by Mr. Yasir 'Arafat, Chairman of the organization." This agreement was abrogated by the Lebanese Chamber of Deputies, 21 May 1987 as well as the abrogation of the law issued by the Chamber of Deputies on 14 June 1983, authorizing the Government to ratify the agreement signed by the Government of the Lebanese Republic and the Government of the State of Israel on 17 May 1983. LebanonWire.com, "The Cairo Agreement November 3, 1969," available from http://www.lebanonwire.com/prominent/historic_documents/1969_cairo_agreement.asp; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

³⁵ McGowan, et al., *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 186-187.

³⁶ "The number of Palestine refugees registered with UNRWA in Lebanon is currently 409,714, or an estimated 10 per cent of the population of Lebanon, a small country which is now quite densely populated. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face specific problems. They do not have social and civil rights, and have very limited access to the government's public health or educational facilities and no access to public social services. The majority rely entirely on UNRWA as the sole provider of education, health and relief and social services. Considered as foreigners, Palestine refugees are prohibited by law from working in more than 70 trades and professions. This has led to a very high rate of unemployment amongst the refugee population." United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), "Lebanon Refugee Camp Profiles," 31 December 2006; available from <http://www.un.org/unrwa/refugees/lebanon.html>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2008.

³⁷ Zunes, 2.

³⁸ McGowan, et al., *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 190-191.

³⁹ Zunes, 2.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁴¹ Trevor N. Dupuy and Paul Martell, *Flawed Victory: The Arab –Israeli Conflict and the 1982 War on Lebanon* (Fairfax, VA: Hero Books, 1996), 185.

⁴² Quandt, 240.

⁴³ Ibid. “The first MNF was established when the Israeli siege intensified on the Lebanese capital during the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, with contributions from the U.S., France, Italy, and later the United Kingdom, to oversee the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut.”

⁴⁴ The White House, “President Bush Discusses Israeli -Palestinian process,” 10 January 2008, linked from the *White House Home Page*, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/01/print/20080110-3.html>; Internet; accessed 26 March 2008.

⁴⁵ Sherifa Zuhur, *The Middle East: Politics, History, And Neonationalism* (Carlisle, PA: Institute of Middle Eastern Islamic and Diasporic Studies, 2005), Chapters 1 and 4.

⁴⁶ Julia Choucair, “Lebanon: Finding a Path from Deadlock to Democracy,” Middle East Series, Democracy and Rule of Law, *Carnegie Papers* Project Number 64 (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, January 2006), 3; available from www.carnegieendowment.org/files/CP64.Choucair.FINAL1.pdf; Internet, accessed 1 March 2008.

⁴⁷ McGowan, et al., *Lebanon: A Country Study*, 194.

⁴⁸ Zunes, 6.

⁴⁹ International Crisis Group, 10.

⁵⁰ “Members of Parliament met in Taif, Saudi Arabia, in September 1989 and reached agreement on political reform, the ending of the war in Lebanon, the establishment of special relations between Lebanon and Syria, and a framework for the beginning of Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon.” LebanonWire.com, “The Taef Agreement September 1989,” available from http://www.lebanonwire.com/prominent/historic_documents/1989_taeef_agreement.asp; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁵¹ The main points of the 1701 resolution are: “1. Reaffirms its call for the strict respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity, and political independence of Lebanon under the sole and exclusive authority of the Government of Lebanon throughout Lebanon; 2. Calls upon all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon; 3. Calls for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias; 4. Supports the extension of the control of the Government of Lebanon over all Lebanese territory; The main points of this Resolution are that it: 5. Declares its support for a free and fair electoral process in Lebanon’s upcoming presidential election conducted according to Lebanese constitutional rules devised without foreign interference or influence; 6. Calls upon all parties concerned to cooperate fully

and urgently with the Security Council for the full implementation of this and all relevant resolutions concerning the restoration of the territorial integrity, full sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon; 7. Requests that the Secretary-General report to the Security Council within thirty days on the implementation by the parties of this resolution and decides to remain actively seized of the matter.” United Nations, Security Council, "Resolution 1559," 2 September 2004; available from <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/498/92/PDF/N0449892.pdf?OpenElement>; Internet; accessed 13 March 2007.

⁵² Nakhleh, 26. The March 14th coalition included those who participated in the “Cedar Revolution” against the Syrian occupation on March 14, 2005 with Saad el Hariri; Walid Jumblat; Samir Geagea; and General Michel Aoun. After the Syrian withdrawal, Aoun left the coalition. Some called it the “February 14th” or the “Hariri” coalition.”

⁵³ “Lebanon-External Affairs,” *JANE’s Sentinel Security Assessment Library* (14 March 2008) [database on-line]; available from JANE’s; accessed 17 March 2008.

⁵⁴ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003*, 108th Congress, 1st sess., H.R. 1828, Preamble, 12 April 2003.

⁵⁵ White House, “Press Conference by the President,” 20 December 2007, linked from the *White House Home Page*, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/12/20071220-1.html>; Internet; accessed 17 March 2008.

⁵⁶ Patrick Seale, “The Struggle for Lebanon,” 22 January 2008, linked from the *Agence Global Home Page*; available from <http://www.agenceglobal.com/article.asp?id=1462>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2008. The Amin Gemayel government and U.S.-sponsored agreement with Israel was opposed by the Muslim and Druze factions in Lebanon, and by Syria. It was subsumed in the ongoing Lebanese Civil War, it was never implemented or ratified, and was finally formally revoked by the Lebanese Parliament at a later date.

⁵⁷ Bilal Y. Saab and Elie D. Al-Chaer, “The Dilemma of Democracy in Lebanon,” 20 January 2008, linked from the *Brookings Homepage*, available from http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2007/1106_lebanon_saab.aspx?e=1; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁵⁸ Choucair, 3.

⁵⁹ Marina Ottaway, *Iraq: Without Consensus, Democracy Is Not the Answer*, Policy Brief 36, (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 2005); available from <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/PB36.ottaway.FINAL.pdf>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁶⁰ Choucair, 3.

⁶¹ President Bush suggested policy on Lebanese Parliament presidential election during his visit to the Middle East on December 20, 2007: “We are -- our view on Lebanon -- first of all, it's very important that Lebanon -- Lebanon's democracy succeed. Secondly, as you know, we did work with the French on 1559 to get Syria out of Lebanon, and Syria needs to stay out of Lebanon. Syria needs to let the process in Lebanon work. And if they can't come to an agreement -- I appreciate the sides trying to work on a common ground for a president, but if

they can't come for agreement, then the world ought to say this: that the March 14th Coalition can run their candidate and their parliament; majority plus one ought to determine who the president is. And when that happens, the world ought to embrace the president." White House, "Press Conference by the President," 20 December 2007, linked from the *White House Home Page*, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/12/20071220-1.html>; Internet; accessed 17 March 2008.

⁶² Ackerman.

⁶³ Nicholas Blanford, "U.S. Warship Stirs Lebanese Fear of War," *Christian Science Monitor*, 4 March 2008 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0304/p01s01-wome.html?>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008. See also, John Keller, "Destroyer Diplomacy: USS Cole Brings Symbolic Punch to Tense Middle East," linked from *The Mil & Aero Blog Home Page* available from <http://www.pennwellblogs.com/mae/2008/02/destroyer-diplomacy-uss-cole-brings.html>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

⁶⁴ Lucy Fielder, "Full Steam Ahead," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 6-12 March 2008 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2008/887/re5.htm>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008. White House, "Press Gaggle by Gordon Johndroe," 29 February 2008; press brief linked from the *White House Home Page*, available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2008/02/20080229.html>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.

⁶⁵ Nizar Abdel Kader, "US Policy towards Lebanon: Hurdles and Prospect," *Defense Magazine*, October 2007 [journal on-line]; linked from *The Lebanese Army Homepage*; available from <http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/article.asp?ln=en&id=16364>; Internet; accessed 20 March 2008.

⁶⁶ Alin, 152

⁶⁷ Ibid., 152-153.

⁶⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Special Message to the Congress on the Situation in the Middle East", 5 January 1957, linked from the *American Presidency Project Home Page*, available from [http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11007&st=&st1](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=11007&st=&st1;); Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁶⁹ Alin, 152-153.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 143

⁷¹ Abdel Kader.

⁷² Alin, 156.

⁷³ Bernard Reich, *Political Leaders of the Contemporary Middle East and North Africa, A Biographical Dictionary* (Portsmouth, NH: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1990), 136.

⁷⁴ Quandt, 237.

⁷⁵ Sandra Mackey, *Lebanon: A House Divided* (London: W. W. Norton, 1989), 180-190.

⁷⁶ Ted Galen Carpenter, "Bush Misreads History," *Orange County Register*, 29 September 2005; available from http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=5104; Internet; accessed 1 March 2008.

⁷⁷ John Benson Matthews, *United States Peacekeeping in Lebanon 1982-1984: Why It Failed?* (Ph.D. diss., Program in American Studies, Washington State University, 1994), v.

⁷⁸ Dupuy and Martell, 207.

⁷⁹ Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004), 206-208.

⁸⁰ Sheldon L. Richman, *The United States in Lebanon: A Case for Disengagement*, Cato Policy Analysis no. 35 (Washington, D.C.: Cato Institute, 3 April 1984), 1-2; available from <http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa035.html>; Internet; accessed 1 February 2008.

⁸¹ Choucair, 4.

⁸² Riad Kahwaji, "Lebanon Awaits Military Aid Promised by West," *Defense News*, 11 June 2007.

⁸³ *National Security Strategy For Combating Terrorism* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, September 2006), 9; linked from *The White House Home Page*; available from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/nsct2006.pdf>; Internet; accessed 23 March 2008.

⁸⁴ Sedky Sobhy, *The U.S. Military Presence in the Middle East: Issues and Prospects*, Strategy Research Project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 18 March 2005), 10.

⁸⁵ Ottaway.

⁸⁶ Iraq Study Group, *The Iraq Study Group Report* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006); available from http://www.usip.org/isg/iraq_study_group_report/report/1206/iraq_study_group_report.pdf; Internet; accessed 4 March 2008.

⁸⁷ Sobhy, 18-19.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Sayed, 336. In contrast, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Zalmay Khalilzad alluded to an Israeli "approval to provide information," about the cluster bombs. *Naharnet Newsweek*, 11 March 2008, available from <http://www.naharnet.com/domino/tn/newsdesk.nsf/Lebanon>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2008.